

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1300

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: PEKING ARMY DAY

THE FOLLOWING REPORT ON ATMOSPHERICS OF ARMY DAY IN
PEKING SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH HONG KONG'S
MORE DETAILED ANALYSIS:

1. CHOU EN-LAI HEADED THE IMPRESSIVE LIST OF POLITBURO
MEMBERS THAT TURNED OUT FOR ANNUAL DINNER ON EVE PRC
ARMY DAY. FOREIGN CHIEFS OF MISSION AND JOURNALISTS
PRESENT HAVE TOLD US THAT ONE MAJOR PURPOSE OF OCCASION
CLEARLY WAS TO EMPHASIZE CHOU'S STARRING ROLE AND HIS
REAPPEARANCE IN REASONABLY GOOD HEALTH. TO UNDERLINE
CHOU'S LEADING ROLE, HE ENTERED THE HALL A FULL FIVE
PACES AHEAD OF THE NEXT RANKING PERSONALITIES -- WANG
HUNG-WEN AND YEH CHIEN-YING -- AND UPON SEEING HIM,
CHINESE OFFICIALS PRESENT (JOINED BY DIPLOMATS) BEGAN
TO CLAP LOUDLY. THE APPLAUSE CONTINUED FOR QUITE SOME
TIME AND ALTHOUGH IT BECAME RYTHMIC AND LACKING IN THE
SPONTANEITY OF THE APPLAUSE THAT WELCOMED CHOU TO THE
MAY 31 BANQUET FOR MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER RAZAK,
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OVERALL EFFECT WAS NEVERTHELESS IMPRESSIVE. CHOU APPEARED

SOMEWHAT SALLOW AND OBVIOUSLY WEAKER THAN HIS OLD SELF BUT HE BEHAVED IN THE NORMAL FASHION FOR FUNCTIONS OF THIS NATURE -- TALKING ANIMATEDLY, JOKING AND WALKING TO ADJACENT TABLES TO EXCHANGE MAO-T'AI TOASTS WITH EACH GUEST. HE WAS THERE FOR THE ENTIRE OCCASION WHICH LASTED JUST OVER ONE HOUR.

2. IN KEEPING WITH "PEOPLE'S DAILY" HEADLINE DECLARING AFFAIR WAS "FROM START TO FINISH FILLED WITH REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT OF UNITY AND VICTORY", SECOND PURPOSE OF DINNER WAS TO EMPHASIZE UNITY. OTHER LEADERS MADE GREAT POINT OF ENGAGING IN ANIMATED CONVERSATIONS AND EXCHANGING TOASTS IN A WAY CALCULATED TO DEMONSTRATE REGIME UNITY TO THE GATHERED DIPLOMATS. WANG HUNG-WEN WORE A MILITARY UNIFORM AND INDULGED IN A NOTICEABLE AMOUNT OF DRINKING AND SMOKING. CHANG CH'UN-CH'IAO, WITH A LONGER MILITARY BACKGROUND THAN WANG, APPEARED IN CIVILIAN ATTIRE. CHIANG CH'ING (WHO WORE A BLACK DRESS WITH A PLEATED SKIRT FOR THE OCCASION) SEEMED MORE RESERVED THAN SOME OF THE OTHERS. SHE SPOKE RELATIVELY LITTLE TO OTHERS AT THE HEAD TABLE AND SEEMED TO ADDRESS HER REMARKS SOLELY TO WANG HUNG-WEN. SPECIAL ATTENTION WAS PAID TO THE CAMBODIAN REPRESENTATIVE GENERAL YANG SHEN-AN (PRESUMABLY DUONG SAM OL) DURING THE BANQUET.

3. A FURTHER MANIFESTATION OF THE "UNITY" THEME WAS THE REAPPEARANCE OF FORMER ACTING CHIEF OF STAFF YANG CH'ENG-WU AND FORMER AIR FORCE POLITICAL COMMISSAR YU LI-CHIN, WHO BOTH DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT IN MARCH 1968 AFTER HAVING BEEN ACCUSED OF VARIOUS "CRIMES". OUR RECORDS ARE NOT COMPLETE, BUT WE SUSPECT OTHER PLA LEADERS LONG ABSENT FROM THE SCENE MAY HAVE REAPPEARED AS WELL. THE DIPLOMATS PRESENT WERE UNAWARE OF THIS DEVELOPMENT, SINCE NO REFERENCE WAS MADE TO IT BY THE CHINESE HOSTS.

4. IN VIRTUAL CARBON-COPY OF LAST YEAR'S COVERAGE, "PEOPLE'S DAILY" TODAY CARRIES PICTURE OF AN OBVIOUSLY MUCH-YOUNGER MAO IN HIS PLA UNIFORM. MAO QUOTE EMPHASIZES ROLE OF THE PARTY AS THE CORE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND THE NECESSITY OF ARMY AND PEOPLE TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER.

5. "PEOPLE'S DAILY" AUGUST 1 MADE NO MENTION OF PARTY AND MILITARY TURN-OUTS IN CENTERS OUTSIDE PEKING, AND WE WILL NEED TO AWAIT FURTHER INFORMATION TO JUDGE STATUS OF SENIOR MILITARY LEADERS WHO HAVE BEEN UNDER POSTER ATTACK RECENTLY IN VARIOUS REGIONS.

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